The Dakota language /

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THE DAKOTA LANGUAGE. BY REV. S. R. RIGGS.

To the Officers and Members of the Minnesota Historical Society:

Gentlemen:—Right sorry am I that, owing to the distance of Lac-qui-Parle from St. Paul, and the season of the year at which your annual meeting takes place, as well as on account of other pressing duties, I am unable to answer in person to the invitation kindly extended to me, by the Honorable Executive of the Society, to address you on the coming occasion. The address which I have prepared has been placed in the hands of the Hon. M. McLeod , to be used as the Society may judge best.*

* The Address was road at the annual Meeting by Mr. McLeod.

Connected with the subject therein presented, is a point to which I wish for a moment, to call your attention: viz: The destiny of these Indian Tribes . It is well understood by all thinking persons, that in their present uncivilized condition, they cannot long continue. Civilization, as it passes onward, must encircle them with its blessings, or sweep them from the face of the earth. They must be civilized and christianized or perish. It seems also to be passing from a state of theory to that of a generally admitted fact, that the Indians in any state, cannot long continue to exist as a separate people. The great American people, will without doubt, absorb every other interest and every other existence within its wide spreading reach.

There are certain great and predominant influences which 90 direct the moral and political formations and transformations, which are silently and constantly taking place in our country. The result of these influences is the production of a homogeneous whole, out of a heterogeneous mass. To a certain extent this is admitted by all—but there are certain

elements which politicians, who have grown up under particular influences declare to be not capable of combination. Nevertheless this combination is going on very rapidly, but such persons have not the sagacity to perceive it, or moral honesty enough to admit it. Owing to various causes operating for evil, the unity of the race has been apparently broken up, insomuch that it has come to be denied. That unity will be restored by the progress of science and art, and especially by the universal prevalence of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace—producing a brotherhood of nations.

As it regards these Indians, the question, with philanthropists and christians, is, not whether they can be expected to preserve their national existence, it is admitted that they cannot, the effort to keep them in that state has already operated in a manner very prejudicial to the interests of many small tribes—but the question is, what boon shall we hold out to them, to what place shall we assign them; to what kind of civilization shall we introduce them? Shall we refuse to grant them the rights of citizens, when they become fitted to exercise those rights? If so we press them back into barbarism. Shall we not rather hold out to them with the restraints of law, its blessing and privileges ? At present an Indian has very little inducement to change his habits. He thereby cuts himself off from the sympathies of his own people, and he hears no friendly voice, emanating from our legislative halls, saying to him, come up higher. This is a subject for our legislators to consider well.

And what is the type of civilization to which we shall try 91 to introduce them? Shall it not be that which eminently characterizes our own age—and which has been produced, more than by any other influence, by the dissemination of the religion of the bible ? Where the Bible is not read by the common people, there the civilization is of a lower grade. Education in the broadest sense of the word—education in the arts as well as the letters of civilization—education for time and also eternity, should be sought for them. Nothing short of this will meet the obligations resting upon us as a people. In the language of Prof. Gammell, in his excellent “History of the Am. Baptist Missions,” “their claims upon the sympathies and philanthropy of American christians are, if possible, stronger than those of

any other portion of mankind. It is for us that their heritage has been despoiled, and they have been scattered and wasted, and it is to us that Providence has assigned the broad domain, which they lately held by the undisputed possession of centuries. We are daily treading amid the graves of their dead, and are occupying the ancient homes where they once dwelt in barbarian pride and power.

“In their civil relations to the American people, they have been styled the adopted children of the republic; they are under its protection and within its guardian care. Their condition, on this account, the more earnestly invites the ceaseless endeavors of christian philanthropy, to raise them from degradation, and reclaim them from barbarism, and pour into their darkened natures, the light of the Gospel, which has made our national condition and prospects so different from theirs.”

Permit me to subscribe myself, Yours very truly.

S. R. RIGGS.

Lac-qui-Parle, Dec. 2, 1850.

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ADDRESS.

Language is the vehicle of thought; the medium of communication between one being and another. It is a combination of arbitrary sounds and signs, by which one mind communicates its thoughts, feelings, and purposes to other minds similarly constituted.

From the Bible history of our race, it appears that man was created, not only with the power of speech, but with the complete knowledge of a language adequate to the fulfillment of all the high and noble purposes of communicating freely and fully with his kindred man, and also with his creator God. And the first specimen of written language, of which we have any authentic account, is that which was graven by the finger of God,

on the two tables of stone, on “the mount that burned with fire.” Hence the inference that language, both spoken and written, is from God.

Human language must necessarily be an imperfect medium of communicating the feelings and purposes of mind. It is the channel of thought, and is deep or shallow, as thought is deep or vigorous, or otherwise. And as the abundant rain showers from heaven, falling upon earth's surface, often make new channels of communication with the great ocean, so mind, when invigorated and enlarged, works its thoughts out through new channels, forming new words and forms of speech, or imparting new meanings to those already in use. Hence the study of language is ever new and ever interesting. This must have been so when “all the earth was of one language and one speech,” and nothing prevented free communication between all the members of the human family. But much mere has it become a study of intense interest, since, as a check on rebellion, God has scattered and separated the one great family of man, by introducing a diversity of languages.

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It is a remarkable fact that all languages, barbarous as well as civilized, present but different shades of the same mental philosophy. From this source also, it seems to me, is derived one of the strongest arguments for the unity of the race. At the same time, a careful comparison of the languages of the various tribes of men, will ultimately prove the most certain guide to ascertaining their proper place in the great family, and the time of their divergence from the parent stock.

As darkness and barbarism and war have, in the past ages of the world, been powerfully productive of dialects and languages, so may it not be hoped that the spreading of light and knowledge—the late wonderful applications of science to art—the steamship, the railroad and telegraph—with principles of peace and the religion of the Bible, may be the means of restoring the family of man again, if not to one, at least to the use of a few languages? Christianity and civilization, in their progress, are even now accomplishing this object. Some of the languages of our own American indians have already perished.

And it does not require the spirit of prophecy to foretell that this will be the destiny of all. It would seem highly probable, at least, that the English language, before many centuries, will prevail over the whole of North America. All others will give place and be merged into it.

Having made these general remarks, I may announce as the subject for the present occasion, “ The Dakota Language .” And I do this the more cheerfully, because the members of this Society, as well as the citizens of Minnesota generally, have lately manifested a kindly interest in the welfare of the Dakota people, as well as a laudable curiosity in regard to their language.

The Dakotas, or Sioux, number about twenty-five thousand persons. Besides these, the Assinnaboins are said to speak 94 substantially the same language. Dakota tradition says that they were originally a family or clan of the Sioux, and were separated by a quarrel which arose about a woman.*

* It seems that quarrels about women have very often effected the separation of bands, and made enemies of nations. Mr. A. Renville states that about one hundred and fifty years ago, or in the days of his great grand mother, when the Mdewakantonwan were living about Mille Lac, a quarrel of this kind took place, which resulted in the going off of a large family of Dakotas to the Chippewas. They became incorporated with the Chippewas, and many of the present band of Hole-in-the-day, and also of those who live on the St. Croix, are the descendants of that Dakota colony. He says that many of these Chippewas still trace their connection to Tatankamani and Ohnashkinyan, who are also the ancestors of Wakute's band at Red Wing. If this statement is true, it can doubtless be verified by those who live among the Chippewas, and will be a matter of interest in the history of both tribes.

Many words in the Osage language are the same as in Dakota. And the same is probably true in regard to the Omaha. They appear to be branches of the same family.

In the language, as spoken by the different bands of those properly denominated Dakotas, considerable difference exists. The intercourse between the Mdewakantonwans on the Mississippi and lower St. Peters, and the Warpetonwans, Warpekutes and a part of the Sissitonwan family, has been so constant, that but slight differences are discoverable, in their manner of speaking. In some instances where the Warpetonwans use *d* , some of the Mdewakantonwans so modify the sound that it becomes *t* ; and where the former use *h* , the latter sometimes use *n* . As a matter of course, some few words have currency in one band, which are not used, perhaps not generally known by the others. But no differences of language which exist are of such a kind as to impede the free intercourse of thought. The Sissitonwans of Lake Traverse and the prairies, present more differences in their speech. One of the most marked of these, is their use of *na* for *dan* , the diminutive termination. As there is less frequent intercourse between them and the Isanties,† name given by the Missouri Indians to those living on the St.

† Isau-ati, or Isan-yati, is the Dakota word.

95 Peters and Mississippi,)their provincialisms are more numerous. And from their connections with the Ihanktonwans of the prairie, they have adopted some of their forms of speech. The chief peculiarity of the Ihanktonwan dialect is, their almost universally substituting *k* for *h* . The Titonwans have made farther innovations. They use *g* hard for *h* of the Isanties and *k* of the Ihanktonwans, and rejecting *d* altogether, use *l* in its place. By the bands of Dakotas east of the James' river, hard *g* is not used, except final in a syllable where a contraction has taken place, and *l* is not heard at all. Thus *chanpahmihma* , (a wagon or cart,) of the Warpetonwans, become *chanpanminma* in the mouth of a Mdewakantonwan, and *chanpakmikma* in that of an Ihanktonwan and *chanpagmikma* with a Titonwan. Hda (to go home) of the Isanties, is kda in the Ihanktonwan dialect, and gla in the Titonwan. Many words too, are entirely different, as for example, Isan, a knife —the Titonwans say milla, and the Ihanktonwans, minna. Isantanka, the name by which the people of the United States are known on the Mississippi and St. Peters, becomes Minna-hanska and Milla-hanska on the Missouri. Young persons, passing from the

Mississippi to the Missouri, and listening for the first time, to the speech of the Titonwans, find considerable difficulty in understanding them; and the same is true in regard to young Titonwans, when first they visit the villages of the Isanties.

The Dakota may be said to resemble other languages in the fact, that it consists etymologically of articles, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. In its syntactical arrangement, it is like other primitive languages, and unlike the English and other modern languages. This I shall have occasion to illustrate in another connection.

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The Latin word “Mamma” was originally Greek, and has come down, in some form, into most modern languages. But the predominant meaning attached to it by the old Romans, viz: “Breast, pap, from which the young is nourished.” seems to have been unknown to their eastern neighbors. Tiffs meaning we retain in mammal, mammalia, etc. The Dakota word “mama” is used with this same Latin signification. It is a curie us fact that “mama” refers to the sustenance afforded the child by the mother, and “papa” is used by the Indians of the prairie for dried meat, the food of man.

A strong likeness is seen in the Dakota pronouns “ma,” “mi,” (me) and “miye” (me-ya) to the Latin “mihi,” “me,” “meus,” etc; and some resemblance in sound exists between “tu” and “tuus” of the Latins, and “tuwe” of the Dakotas, but the latter means who. When I first commenced learning the Dakota language, this likeness in sound, and unlikeness in sense, was, on several occasions, the cause of my making ludicrous mistakes. The Dakota pronoun “iye,” he or she is the same in sense, and probably nearly the same in sound with the Latin “ille”—the double l having the force of y, as at present in the French language.

The only Dakota word beside “mama,” which I have noticed as having a strong resemblance to the English, both in sense and sound, is “skepa” (ska-pa) meaning to

evaporate, to escape. A friend of mine notices a resemblance between the French word “couler” and the Dakota “kuse,” both meaning to leak.

In Dakota there are two articles, *wan* and *kin* or *chin* . It is sufficient for the purposes of this occasion, to say that they are used, generally, where the English *a* or *an* and *the* would be required, but not always, and that their place is after the noun, etc., never before it.

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In all languages the names of things form a very important class of words. The Dakota vocabulary of trees and shrubs covers probably all, or nearly all, the varieties which grow in their country. Their names for herbs and grasses are more limited, being confined chiefly to such as are known by them to possess medicinal properties, and such as are the food of certain animals. While they have names for the fruits that grow in their country, they have very few specific names for flowers. The fish in their waters, and the birds and fowls of the air, whether resident or otherwise in their own country, have all names; and it is not strange, though somewhat humiliating, to find the Dakotas better acquainted with the names and habits of these inhabitants of the waters, air, and earth, than we are. Their nomenclature of quadrupeds living in their country, is, of course, not defective; but their knowledge of the horse has not extended back many centuries, as is manifest from the fact that they call him Shuktanka and Shunka wakan, great dog and spirit dog. This is a like formation with mazakan and maze wakan, spirit iron, their name for a gun. Another example of the same kind is found in Wakantanka, Great Spirit.

They have been so much engaged, from time immemorial, in dissecting wild animals, that their vocabulary of terms denoting the different parts of the body, is much more extensive and definite than exists in our own language, aside from the technical terms employed in the science of anatomy. But in terms to express abstract ideas the Dakota language is undoubtedly defective. The ideas themselves, not having entered their minds, they needed not the clothing of words. They do not appear to have any words corresponding to color, time, and space. They do not feel the need of them. They can talk of the different kinds of

color, as white, black, red, etc.; and they have words to express the great divisions of time, as day and night, summer and winter; while ideas 6 98 respecting space are expressed by long and short, far and near. Like the ancient Latins, their virtue is bravery, and their sin (woartani) is not a violation of the law of God, but the transgression of their own customs, which induces disease or physical evil of some kind. The teachings of the Bible have wonderfully changed the meaning attached to many words in our own language, and they are capable of working the same transformations for the Dakotas.

In this connection, it is only just to remark, that the language under consideration is possessed of great flexibility; almost all words expressing quality may be so changed as to stand for those qualities in the abstract. And nouns of the instrument, nouns of the agent or actor, as well as abstract nouns, may. be formed from most verbs.

Of necessity there are now many compound nouns, as Wata-tanka, a large boat; Peta-wata, a fire or steam boat, of *wata* , a canoe. The names of men and women are usually compounded words. *Win* used at the end, shows that it is a woman's name. *Dan* , as an affix, is, diminutive, as wakpa, a river; wakpadan, a small stream.

The birthright names of children, in a family, is a peculiarity in the Dakota language. The first-born child, if a son is Caske (cha ska); if a daughter, Winona (Wee-no-na). The second, third, fourth, and fifth, if boys, are Hepan (Ha-pan), Hepi (Hapee), Catan (Cha tan) and Bake (Haka); if girls, they are respectively Hapan, Hapistinna, Wanske, and Wihake.

The language of relationship among the Dakotas presents some interesting facts. One's father's brothers are all fathers; and one's mother's sisters are all mothers. Their children are brothers and sisters. The mother's brothers, and the father's sisters, are uncles and aunts; and their children, cousins. A woman calls her elder brother timdo; a man calls his elder brother chinye; while they both agree 99 in calling a younger brother misunka. A woman calls her elder sister michun; and her younger sister, mitanka. A man calls his older sister tanke; and his younger sister, tankshi. A man calls his brother in-law

tahan; and his sister-in-law, hanka; his male cousins, tahanshi: and his female cousins, hankashi. A woman calls her husband's sisters ichepan; and her female cousins and husband's brother's wife, ichepanshi. Her husband's brothers she calls shiche; and her male cousins, and also her husband's sister's husbands, icheshi. The same words are used, by both males and females, for grandfather and grandmother, nephew, niece, and grandchild. Son-in-law and daughter-in-law are designated by the same word. The parents of two persons who are married call each other omawaheton, for which we have no corresponding word in English.

Dakota nouns, generally, are not properly declinable. To form the possessive or genitive case, however, they usually prefix or affix pronouns; for example, sunka, younger brother; mi-sunka, my younger brother; nisunka, your younger brother; sunkaku, his or her younger brother. Michinkshi, my son; nichinkshi your son; chinkintku, his or her son. This affix of the third person is confined to nouns signifying relationship. The idea of property is usually conveyed by mita, nita and ta, contractions of tawa, thus; shunka, a dog; mitashunke, my dog; nitashunke, your dog; tashunke, his or her dog.

I know not that any one has ever had reason to complain of a defect, either in the number or power of the Dakota pronouns. Indeed, to minds constituted like ours, accustomed to regard repetitions as unnecessary, there appears to be, often, quite a redundancy. A Dakota can say simply, I love anything, as in washtewadaka; or he can use two pronouns referring to the same person, and thus give emphasis to his former expression, as mish washtewadaka, I I love. 100 He can say mitawa, mine, simply; or miye mitawa, me mine. In a compounded verb he can use two pronouns, as wahimdotanka, I came, I sat down; and in most cases of this kind one pronoun would be incorrect. The pronouns, I, am, you, are comprehended in the single syllable ci (che); that is, when the action passes from the first to the second person, When introduced into the verb, the objective pronouns take precedence over the subjective, except in the case of the first person plural, and with the second person objective, either singular or plural.*

* There are two classes of personal pronouns, those which are used separately, and such as enter into composition.

1. Mish and miye, I; nish, niye, thou, ish, iye, he, she, or it. Unkish and unkiyepi, we; niyepi, you, iyepi, they. Dual, unkish, and unkiye, we two, In some cases these are used objectively, but generally subjectively.

2. Those that enter into composition are; wa, I; ya, thou; un-pi, weya pi, you. The third person nominative, both singular and, plural, has no inseparable pronoun.

Objective—ma and mi, me; ni, you; un-pi, us; ni-pi, you; wicha, them. Ma and ni as used in neuter and passive verbs, are translated by I and thou.

Possessive Pronouns—Mi, mira, and mitawa, mine; ni, nita, and nitawa thine; ta and ta wa,his or hers; unki-pi, unkita-pi, and unki-tawapi, ours; nipi, nitapi and nitawapi, yours; ta-pi and tawapi, theirs. Dual, unkitawa, ours. The latter form in each case, is used separately; the others are prefixed and affixed to nouns forming the possessed rather than the possessing case.

Words expressing quality, in Dakota, seem to be neither more nor less important than they are in other languages. But, in this respect, the language must be regarded as somewhat defective, as the word *to* must be used to express both green and blue; and skuya means sweet, sour, and salt, and is the only word which the Dakotas have to convey these very different ideas. Contrary to the analogy of most European languages, the Dakota adjective follows the noun, and the adverb precedes the verb.

Words nearly corresponding to more and most and very, are sometimes used in making comparisons. But another method, quite common, which strikes us as eminently primitive, is that of affirming one thing to be good by saying that another is bad—affirming that one of two or more things is the longest by saying that the other is short.

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The Dakota verb is by far the most difficult part of the language; and I am acquainted with nothing in other languages quite so complex.

1. In a large class of verbs, the manner of the action, and the instrument used in producing it are expressed by prefixes to the root. Thus, whether the action is done by cutting with a knife or saw—by shooting or punching, or by the action of rain—by cutting with an axe—by striking with a stick, or by the action of the wind—by the foot—by the hand, as in pushing or rubbing—by the mouth, as in biting or talking; and finally, when the action is done by boring, scratching, pinching, or in any other way not specified, these various ideas are expressed by prefixing ba, bo, ka, na, pa, ya, and pu, to the same root.

2. The Dakota verb tells whether one is going home or elsewhere—whether he has come home, or to a place where he does not reside—whether what he has is his own or another's—whether he is eating his own food or his neighbor's, and whether what he is making is for himself or another, and all this by means of prefixes.

3. All active transitive verbs in the Dakota language, have forms corresponding to the middle voice of the Greek and the Hithpael of the Hebrew, in which the action terminates on the actor.*

* It has been said that the Dakota language resembles the Greek. This correspondence with the middle voice may be some wineries on that point. Webster, in his admirable dictionary of the English language, under the letter “a,” states that the word father In old Greek and Gothic is “Atta,” which would seem to correspond exactly with “Ate” of the Dakota, (pronounced ata).

But the mention of the Gothic would seem to direct our attention to some of the northern languages of Europe, to find the birth place of the Dakota. Perhaps one acquainted

with the language of Jenny Lind and Frederika Bremer might find resemblances more numerous than can be traced in languages farther south.

They have also forms expressing reciprocal action.

4. Many Dakota verbs express the idea of relationship by the insertion of ki; that is, convey the idea of doing to error one's own, as relations or property.

5. Frequency of action is expressed by the reduplication of a syllable.

6. A few verbs have a prefix which fixes the action to the middle of object.

7. The pronouns, both subjective and objective, are either prefixed to the verb or inserted. Here one finds the greatest difficulty in acquiring the language. Many persons who understand the language, and are supposed to speak it well, nevertheless, often make ludicrous, and sometimes serious, mistakes in the insertion of pronouns into verbs. The first difficulty which the learner meets with, is to know the place of the pronoun in the verb. The next is to know the relative position of the nominative and objective. And the third and greatest of all is to acquire such a facility in the use of them that they will always come in the right place.

8. The prepositions *to* and *for* are introduced into many verbs, generally between the pronouns, some of which are changed in consequence.

9. The causative form, answering to the Hebrew Hiphil, is made by affixing kiya or ya to the root or ground form of the verb.

10. Most verbs in the language may be used in both the construct and absolute forms. It is sufficiently exact for the present occasion, to say that, generally, wa prefixed to the construct form makes the absolute. For example, yazan, to be sick, is the construct, and is always used when the body, or any particular part of it, is said to be sick—as pa mayazan,

my head is sick. But wamayazan is, simply and abstractedly, I am sick. These absolute forms often express the idea of custom or habit in the agent.

From these statements it will be perceived that a full paradigm of the Dakota verb must comprehend a vast number of forms; and it will readily be admitted, that, to master it fully, must be a work of no small difficulty. It will farther 103 be easily understood that many ideas which we express by considerable circumlocution, our Indian neighbors can convey, more directly and forcibly, in a single word.

The plural of Dakota verbs, as well as nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, is formed by affixing bi to the singular. When either the subjective or objective pronoun is plural, the pi is required, except in the case of wicha, them, used with *wa* , I or *ya* , thou. A noun of multitude is often comprehended, in, and represented by, singular pronouns and verbs, as one can readily perceive by listening to the speech of a chief.

The use of the dual form, as in Greek, comprehending the person speaking and the one spoken to, gives variety and beauty to the language. But notwithstanding the great variety of forms which the Dakota verb assumes, by means of pronouns, it is not to be disguised that, in some cases, it is not always plain, which is the subject, and which the object; which the actor, and which the actee. Take, for example, “The Chippewas have killed Dakotas”—Raratonwan Dakota wicaktipi. The natural place for the subject of the verb appears to be before the object; but its right to that place does not seem to be so well determined, as that there may not be a doubt in regard to which is so used. The objective pronoun refers always to the objective noun. The expression often needs an explanation.

The third person singular of the verb, contracted if capable of contraction, is used as the infinitive mood; in which case another verb immediately follows. This is undoubtedly the ground form of the verb. By some of the members of the Dakota mission, it is considered as the participial form. The conditional mood is formed by means of conjunctions. The imperative singular is formed by *wo, we* , or *ye* , after the verb; the plural by *po, pe, m* ,

or *miye* . *Wo* and *po* are used in commanding; the others in entreating. The Dakota men command; the women entreat.

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The power of reduplication possessed by Dakota adjectives,verbs, and adverbs, gives variety and beauty, as well as strength, to the language. The reduplication of an adjective denotes plurality in the noun preceding; as washte, good, shunka wakan washteshte, good horses. In numerical adjectives, it expresses ideas which could not otherwise be conveyed; as, nomnom, two and two, or by twos; wanwanchadan, a few times, of wanchadan, once. In adverbs it denotes frequency of action in regard to different objects; in verbs it expresses frequency of action in regard to the same thing. Baksa means to cut off, as a stick, with a knife or saw; baksaksa means to cut off several times—to cut into short pieces. Ira means to laugh; irara means to laugh often, laugh at, make fun of. In this connection I may criticise the derivation of “Rara,” the name given to the Falls of St. Anthony. It has been erroneously derived from ira, and translated “Laughing Waters.” “Ira” itself is compounded of “I,” the mouth, and “ra,” to curl. “Rara” is a reduplication of “ra,” to curl: and should be translated “Curling Waters.”

In the arrangement of predicate and subject in a sentence. the Dakota language is eminently primitive and natural. The sentence “Give me bread,” a Dakota transposes to “Aguyapi maqu ye”—bread me give. Such is the genius of the language, that, in translating a sentence or verse from the Bible, one expects to begin, not at the beginning, but at the end. And such too, is the common practice of their best interpreters; where the person who is speaking leaves off, there they usually commence and proceed backward to the beginning. In this way the connection of the sentences is more easily retained in the mind, and more naturally evolved. There are, however, some eases in which this method cannot be followed. In a logical argument, if the conclusion is first translated, it will, in some cases, need 105 to be repeated after the premises; but the *therefore* which connects the conclusion to the premises, very frequently, in Mr. Renville's translations, comes after the conclusion. This method of expressing ideas, so entirely different from that, to which our

minds have been accustomed, makes it difficult to learn to think in Dakota, and still more difficult to think in English and express one's self in Dakota.

For many years the members of the Dakota mission have been more or less engaged, as other duties would permit, in collecting and arranging vocabularies, and in ascertaining and reducing to form the principles of the language. Their lexicons now contain more than fifteen thousand words, not including the oblique cases of nouns, and the various forms of verbs dependent on the introduction of pronouns and prepositions. We do not flatter ourselves that our work in this direction is accomplished. Doubtless there are words which we have not yet gathered, and they may be more numerous than we are aware of. Very many of our definitions are still imperfect, and a few of them may be wrong. We have done what we could.

A strictly phonetic method of writing the language has been employed, and one, in most points, coinciding with that recommended by Dr. Pickering. Thus, for one who can make the peculiar sounds readily, learning to read Dakota requires but little labor. The peculiar sounds of the language are two gutterals, represented by the characters *g* and *r* ,* and four clicks, represented by *c. q. p.t* . As the *q* was used for no other purpose, it did not need the mark attached to the other characters. There are at least two other slight modifications of sound which we have not generally indicated. The *f* and *v* of the English alphabet. have not been used. *C* and *z* are used with the power of *ch* and sh.

* Pronounced YTU and RHE.

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Accent in Dakota is quite important. The meaning of many words depends upon it; as, for instance, *ma* -ga, a field, and ma- *ga* , a goose. The principle of accenting seems to be determined from the beginning of the word, not from the end. In the case of two thirds, or perhaps three fourths, of all the words in the language, the accent is on the second syllable from the beginning. The greater part of the remainder are accented on the first

syllable; there are a few cases of polysyllables accented on the penultimate. In words of four or more syllables, a secondary accent follows on the second syllable after the primary. Hence it is not unfavorable to the composition of poetry; but, as almost all words end in a vowel or nasal *n* . rhyme can have very little variety.

The language is sometimes figurative from necessity and sometimes from choice. In the latter case, their figures are often “far fetched.” When they ask for an ox in soldier language, they call him a dog; and when a chief begs for a horse, he often does it under the figure of moccasins. Their war songs and others seem to have but little of either the spirit or form of true poetry. A few words make a long song; and, in general, their meaning is just the opposite of that naturally conveyed by the words. For example: naming a young man who has acted very bravely, killed an enemy and taken his scalp, they say, “you are a fool; you let the Chippewas strike you” And this is understood to be the highest form of eulogy.

In conclusion, I may say, that we cannot but regard the Dakota as a noble language; not perfect indeed, but as perfect as, in the circumstances, it could be expected to be—a language, which, while in some things it is very defective, in other departments, abounds in forms expressing varieties in action; and one which, from its great flexibility, is capable of vast improvement. But in a century more it will 107 probably not be spoken. Nor is it perhaps desirable that it should continue as a living language. The question then is, when it is dead—when the Dakota race, as such, shall have passed away, as their own buffalo of the prairie—shall we not retain an adequate memorial of them? Shall not the names of our rivers be the names of their rivers; and shall not the names of our towns remind us of these races that have become merged into our own? And especially, shall we not hand down to posterity the means of knowing what the Dakota language was? When Minnesota is a great State—when its inhabitants are counted by millions, and when railroads and telegraph wires are the great veins and arteries of its intercommunication,

may the archives of this Society show, that we, who now live, have, in this respect, both known and done our duty.

Lac-qui-Parle Mission , November, 1850.